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THE CHRISTIAN APPROACH
TO
ISLAM IN THE SUDAN

THE
CHRISTIAN APPROACH
TO
ISLAM IN THE SUDAN

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PREFACE

In my book *Islam in the Sudan* I try to show that the social, cultural, and religious environment of the Sudanese is a treasure-house in which patterns of life have been built up and through which their religious aspirations can express themselves freely. In this book I have tried, by an analysis of missionary activities in the Sudan, to stimulate creative thought in missionary thinking. The missionary is asked to study the patterns of Sudanese religious life reverently, to try by living contact with the Sudanese to feel their significance in their lives, and learn how to encourage the growth of a Christian community in the Islamic Sudan that will be truly indigenous.

J. S. TRIMMINGHAM

OMDURMAN

1947

CHAPTER I

THE STORY OF MISSIONARY EFFORT

1. *Before the Reconquest*

The Northern Sudan was once a Christian land. Undoubtedly Christianity played an important part in the lives of the people, but that it was a non-viable part is shown by its complete disappearance so that not a vestige remains.

The Sudan lost touch with Christianity during the Funj period in the sixteenth century, for its relationship with Abyssinia hardly constituted such a link, until the Egyptian conquest. That conquest, which opened up the Sudan to an era of unparalleled exploitation, also opened the way to the first heroic, if premature, missionary enterprise. The Church of Rome was the first to consider and attempt missionary enterprise in the vast spaces of the Sudan¹ and the first group of Austrian Roman Catholic fathers arrived in Khartoum in February 1848. Whilst the principal object of the Mission was the conversion of pagans, they protested against the ~~decisions~~ of the Egyptian Government forbidding missionary work amongst Muslims and were able to secure land in Khartoum upon which to build a mission centre. In 1851 Gondokoro station was founded and in 1853 that of the 'Holy Cross' at the village of Angwen. These stations had to be abandoned in 1860 as a result of the incredible toll taken by the land and the lives of the missionaries. In 1861 the Franciscans took over the vicariate. A party of thirty settled near

¹ Pope Gregory XVI issued a brief in 1846 constituting Central Africa a vicariate apostolic. This gave the objects of the proposed mission as the conversion of the negroes, the suppression of the slave-trade and the care of any Roman Catholics working in the Upper Nile regions.

Kaka on the White Nile, but after the death of fourteen in two years, the rest returned to Khartoum. The vicariate was transferred to the Verona College in 1867 and Father Comboni was appointed pro-vicar apostolic for Central Africa. Sir Samuel Baker wrote of the enterprise of these devoted men:

Difficult and almost impossible is the task of the missionary. The Austrian Mission has failed, and their stations have been forsaken; their pious labour was hopeless, and the devoted fathers died upon the barren field. . . . The time has not yet arrived for missionary enterprise in those countries; but at the same time a sensible man might do good service by living among the natives, and proving to their material minds that persons do exist whose happiness consists in doing good to others.¹

In 1878, after the death of Smith and O'Neill in Uganda General Gordon, the Governor of Equatoria, who was greatly venerated in evangelical circles in England, oppressed by the savagery of this 'useless possession' and its great needs, and realizing that the only hope lay in Christianity, wrote to the Secretary of the Church Missionary Society offering protection and assistance to any party passing through the Sudan to the country of M'etsa. But, he advised them, 'there are better fields, much more fertile, and without the drawbacks of this stuck-up savage'. He advised them to seek a 'lower platform' if the C.M.S. was to attain 'the object that sincere Christians have in view, divested of the claptrap glory which attaches to its explorers or Missions in unknown lands'.² Gordon had in view the opening of work among the Azande tribe.

The C.M.S., however, was not willing to commence work in a new area and kept to its old programme. Gordon did not minimize the difficulties of the task, and in a letter to his

¹ *Ismailia*, pp. 107, 113.

² Letter of Gordon quoted in *The Church Missionary Intelligencer*, Mar. 1885, p. 181.

sister, gives his view of the kind of apostle of Christ who could work in such a region:

Where will you find an apostle? I will explain what I mean by the term. He must be a man who has died entirely to the world; who has no ties of any sort; who longs for death when it may please God to take him; who can bear the intense dulness of these countries; who seeks for few letters; and who can bear the thought of dying deserted. Now, there are few, very, *very* few men who can accept this post. But no half-measure will do. . . . A man must give up everything, understand *everything, everything*, to do anything for Christ here. No half or three-quarter measure will do. And yet, what a field!

In 1875, just before the rise of the Mahdi, another group of Roman Catholic missionaries under Father Bonomi arrived in Kordofan and work was commenced at Delen (Dilling), El Obeyd and Melbis. They were captured in 1882 soon after the rise of the Mahdi, refused to become Muslims and spent years in captivity in Omdurman. Some of them succeeded in escaping, including Father Ohrwaldner, who wrote an account of his experiences,¹ and went to work in Jawākin until he was able to return to Omdurman after the reconquest.

Most of the other Christians in the Sudan, Copts, Greeks, Abyssinians and others, joined Islam from fear. Three at least are known to have refused, with no evil consequences. One was a Copt called Rizq Allāh Shukri, who when brought before the Mahdi said, 'My father was a Christian, my mother was a Christian, and I am a Christian, and will remain so. Here is my neck, you may kill me if you like.' Another was a Greek whose name is not preserved, and the third a Coptic woman, Umm Na'ūmi.

The death of Gordon in 1885 stimulated the C.M.S. to prepare for the time when the Sudan should again be open

¹ *Letters of General Gordon to his sister*, 1902, pp. 130-1.

² *Ten Years' Captivity in the Mahdi's Camp*, translated by F. R. Wingate, 1883.

and £3,000 was sent spontaneously to open a fund for a Gordon Memorial Mission.) Preliminary work was done in General F. T. Haig's journey to Sawākin and Hodaïda in 1886, whose reports inspired the Hon. Ian Keith-Falconer to give his life for Arabia. Dr. Harpur of the C.M.S. Medical Mission in Egypt also visited Sawākin in 1890 for famine relief work. But the time had not yet come.

2. *The Beginning of Modern Missionary Enterprise*

J. Krapf, the pioneer C.M.S. missionary in East Africa, wrote as follows in the later years of his life, 'the idea of a chain of mission stations (from the Cape to Cairo) will yet be taken up by successive generations and carried out, for the idea is always conceived tens of years before the deed comes to pass. This idea I bequeath to every missionary coming to East Africa.'¹

When, after Omdurman, the British and Egyptian flags floated over the Sudan, the way seemed to be open to forge new links in the chain of Krapf's 'Pilgrim Mission', and two societies, the Church Missionary Society and the American United Presbyterian Mission, both of whom had long experience of work in Muslim lands, were ready with plans for advance.

On Lord Kitchener's return to England in 1899, a deputation from the C.M.S. waited on him to bring before him their plans for the Sudan. They were met with a refusal of permission to undertake missionary work in the Muslim Sudan 'on the grounds that nothing must be done to arouse Moslem fanaticism'. Lord Kitchener, however, raised no objections to missionary work in the Pagan Sudan, and at the C.M.S. Centenary Meeting on 2nd May 1899 the Secretary of the C.M.S. thrilled his audience when he declared:

The Committee are preparing to send pioneer parties into the

¹ W. W. Cash, *The Changing Sudan*, 1931, p. 78.

east Sudan by the two routes through which it is most accessible. At Tripoli a small band are studying Hausa, and will, God willing, shortly proceed up the Niger for the Hausa States; and from Cairo in the autumn of the year it is hoped a party will go up the Nile to occupy some places in the equatorial provinces of the Eastern Sudan. The Committee anticipate that, in answer to many prayers, the existing interdict on missionary work among the Mohammedans of the Upper Nile will shortly be removed.

The Rev. Llewellyn H. Gwynne was the first C.M.S. missionary to be sent to the Sudan. He sailed on 3rd November 1899. When he arrived in Cairo the authorities would not allow him to proceed further until the country was more settled; but after the Khalifa's death he and Dr. Harpur, the head of the C.M.S. Hospital in Old Cairo, were allowed to go, on the strict understanding that they were not to speak to Muslims about Christianity. Since missionary work was ruled out and it was impossible at that time to proceed south, Lord Kitchener asked Mr. Gwynne to act as chaplain to the troops, there being then no civilians in Omdurman. In this way he succeeded in gaining the confidence of both the administrative authorities and the local population and it is to his early anomalous position as a missionary of the C.M.S. and chaplain to the administration that we owe the present happy relationship between the two branches of the Church of England in the Sudan—the English civil population and the work of the C.M.S. Dr. Harpur was allowed to do a little medical work in a mud hut on the edge of Omdurman, but was hampered by the reputation of 'poisoner' attached to all doctors through the Khalifa's use of them as his official poisoners. He returned to his work in Cairo after less than a year's stay and was succeeded by Dr. Chorley Hall.

The United Presbyterian Mission went through a similar experience. The Rev. Kelly Giffen was the great pioneer missionary. He and Dr. Andrew Watson took a preliminary

tour in the Sudan in 1899 to survey the field. In Omdurman they found Mr. Gwynne and Dr. Harpur, with whom they lodged, thus inaugurating the era of co-operation between the C.M.S. and the American Society which has been so important a feature of mission work in the Sudan. On their return to Cairo they reported on the need for an immediate forward move, and suggested that the Arabic-speaking Injili (Evangelical) Church of Egypt might adopt the Muslim Sudan as its sphere of missionary enterprise. In 1900 the Rev. Kelly Giffen and Dr. H. T. McLaughlin, with an Injili pastor, the Rev. Jabrā Hannā, were appointed to the Sudan. As they were about to leave, the administration, as with the C.M.S., refused them permission to work in the north, but promised to grant them all facilities for work beyond, in the pagan Sudan. They proceeded, however, with their wives in faith to Omdurman, where they began to gather the members of the Injili Church who were working in the Sudan into congregations, and in so doing developed the natural missionary approach. Leaving Mr. Hannā to organize the Injilis, they pressed up the White Nile for a survey which resulted in the recommendation that work should be started amongst the Shilluks on the Sobat River, and eventually in 1902 they set sail to found the station at Doleib Hill.

The Government began to relax their restrictions during the time of Dr. Hall,¹ as the people came to realize the *de facto* *laissez-faire* policy of the Government whatever the reasons, and the Sudanese were allowed to talk with missionaries and attend Christian meetings of their own free will. The *Journal* of Dr. Hall reveals how closely he had adhered to the prohibition against talking about religion, although it cost him much heart-burning to pass by the opportunities of witnessing to Jesus Christ which came to him continually. To the selfless and devoted service of Alexander and Eva Hall is

¹ December 1900 to his death in October 1903. The prohibition against conversation with Muslims about religion was withdrawn in 1903.

due the honour of first breaking through the rock-crust of Sudanese fanaticism against medical missionaries, so that friendship and trust took the place of prejudice and suspicion. Here is an extract from Dr. Hall's *Journal*, dated 11th May 1901:

Two women came from the house of Shaikh 'Ali at-Töm. While waiting to see me they told my wife, 'before you came we believed the talk that the people here were poisoners and we used to pass by the house far away, but now we don't believe that'. An encouraging testimony to the value of lady workers in the Soudan.

These two possessed to a deep degree those qualities of patience, hopefulness and deep concern for Muslims, without which no one should dare to take up work amongst them as a follower of Christ.

The strange fact was that the lives of these pioneers in Omdurman was of great help to the Government in removing the prejudice of the Sudanese against the *Turuk*, the Government itself—for that prejudice is against things non-Muslim and no amount of appeasement will ever reconcile Muslims to what they regard as a Christian Government.

Educational work soon followed, amongst boys, by the Americans, and girls, by the C.M.S., after a statement by Lord Cromer in his report for 1902.¹ Accordingly, the American Mission started a boy's school in Khartoum in 1901, when Dr. Giffen returned from the Sobat, in connection with which a Boys' Home soon developed, and in 1909 a 'Girls' Boarding School at Khartoum North). The C.M.S. started a girls' school in a shop at Khartoum in 1903 with Mr. Gwynne as its 'headmistress' as he loves to style himself,² and in Omdurman in 1903 when Mrs. Hall returned to the Sudan and where she remained until her death in 1925. At first in these schools the majority of the pupils were of

¹ Cf. extract from 1904 Report, q.v. pp. 16-18, below.

² This school was transferred from the Mission to the Diocese in 1928 to become the Unity High School for Girls.

Egyptian or Syrian origin or *mawalladin*,¹ with a minority of Sudanese; but the work soon won the interest of Sudanese, and when the educational centre of mission work shifted to Omdurman they became the majority.

We have now to consider the reasons for the Government's restrictive policy towards missions. The Government, or in other words Lord Cromer, having adopted a policy of benevolent autocracy for the Sudan, decided for once that it might recognize the 'Egyptian' in the phrase 'Anglo-Egyptian Condominium' and regard the Government as *de facto* Muslim, the British being understood to be there as rulers of the people for their own good and therefore trustees of their religious inheritance. So Gordon College, though launched as a memorial to a great Christian with the money of those who wished to honour him as such, became the chief Government and Muslim training institution; Muslim festivals were honoured, Friday was made the weekly holiday, so that Christian officials had to work on Sunday,² and missionary work was forbidden. Lord Cromer sums up his reasons for this prohibition of mission work in the Northern Sudan in his Annual Report for 1904:

In the Northern portion of Sudan . . . it would not for the present, be possible, without incurring great danger, to adopt so liberal and tolerant a policy as that pursued in Egypt. The population of the Sudan generally is as yet far too ignorant and uncivilized to be able to distinguish between the action of the British Government in their corporate capacity, and that of an individual European, whether of British or any other nationality.

¹ *Mawalladin* is used very loosely in the Sudan to mean, (1) half-bred, i.e. one parent Sudanese and the other of foreign origin, and (2) child born of foreigners in the Sudan.

² This was an Islamic innovation of Lord Cromer, for never in the history of Islam has Friday been recognized as a day of rest. It is simply the day when the Muslim is expected to attend the midday prayer and *Khutba* in a congregational mosque. The people of the Sudan would have been perfectly contented had Sunday been made the day of rest, and Lord Kitchener on his return from India suggested that the change should be made.

If free scope were allowed to missionary enterprise, it would not only be wholly unproductive of result, but would also create a feeling of resentment, culminating possibly in actual disturbance, which, far from advancing would almost certainly throw back that work of civilization, which all connected with the country, whether or not connected with missionary enterprise, have so much at heart.

Under these circumstances, I stated in my annual Report for 1902 that both Sir Reginald Wingate and myself were of opinion that 'the time was still distant when mission work could, with safety and advantage, be permitted amongst the Moslem population of the Sudan'. We both remain of that opinion. It is impossible at present to assign any precise limit to the duration of the existing restrictions. From the point of view of British missionary enterprise, these restrictions are so far practically unimportant in that a large field of activity, which they have as yet, owing to want of funds, been unable to occupy has been opened out to them in the southern portions of the Sudan.

To a certain very limited extent, an exception to the application of the principle above enunciated has been made, within the second zone, in the case of Khartoum. The population of that town is not wholly Moslem. There are many Christian residents of various denominations. Moreover, being the seat of Government, the action of any missionary bodies can be carefully supervised; whilst the Moslem population, being in immediate touch with the governing authorities, can more readily comprehend the policy adopted than those residing in the outlying provinces. Further, an active demand for education, which the Government is unable to meet adequately from its own resources, exists, on the part of both Moslems and Christians. Under these circumstances, permission has been given for the establishment of mission schools at Khartoum. It is for the heads of those schools to decide on the amount of religious instruction which shall be afforded to the pupils. The duty of the Government is limited to providing that any Moslem parent—or parent of some Christian denomination other than that under whose auspices the school has been instituted—shall clearly understand the conditions under which secular instruction is imparted, before he sends his child

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to the school. Regulations having this object in view, have accordingly been framed.¹

One can be sympathetic with Lord Cromer's point of view. It was natural that the Government, upon whom fell the burden of a ruling population which had displayed the excess of fanaticism, should be cautious about the effects of Christian missionaries upon it and, when restrictions were relaxed, should keep their activities close to the centres of control. It was obvious to anyone who knows anything of Muslim mentality that official encouragement of mission work would certainly have given the people the impression that the Government was seeking to change their religion, and the Government was wise in its caution, for the spirit of Mahdism was by no means dead.

Missionaries, however, felt that the effective missionary occupation of the Sudan must involve witness to the Gospel, in however meagre a form, in the north as well as the south. Whilst regarding the Government's promise to the Sudanese that there should be no interference with religion as wise and just, they could not wholly agree with the Government's prejudging the situation without experience of the effect of missions. They therefore resolved to take whatever concessions the Government would allow and prove that the influence of missionaries who were experienced in the approach to Muslims does not lead to trouble. The confidence now placed in the two societies by the Government proves that they have succeeded. Nothing in fact could well be more damning than this extract from a Government report in 1925:

The average men, while not fearing that they or their children will be infected with Christianity, do appreciate the fact that School and Hospital are run on a definitely moral and religious basis by men who do their utmost for the pupil and the invalid.

¹ Lord Cromer's *Report on the Sudan* (1904), pp. 50-1.

What Lord Cromer actually wanted to avoid was proselytization, for this method, by detaching the individual from his community, might have led to trouble with the community. But missionaries of experience in Muslim work never attempt proselytization. They approach the Muslim as one who needs Christ and to whom they would make Him known. On the other hand, they objected to the argument of the average official in its stereotyped form which implied an attitude of superiority, 'Islam is a good enough religion for these people; they don't need Christianity!' The real question the missionaries felt was not, 'does the Sudan need the Gospel?'—but, 'has he not a right to hear it?' They had Good Tidings to tell and felt that it was the right of everyone on the face of the earth to hear them. Whether the hearer refuses to receive the Good Tidings is not the missionary's responsibility, provided that he has presented them in the right way.

3. *Missionary Work To-day*

There is one figure without mention of whom any account of missionary work in the Sudan would lack all substance. The Rt. Rev. Llewellyn Gwynne, Anglican Bishop in Egypt and the Sudan,¹ was the first C.M.S. missionary to enter the country and has been the moving spirit of all its activities ever since. His singleness of heart and devotion to his calling, his capacity of understanding men's tendency to 'partial living', whilst at the same time being aware of their infinite possibilities, has drawn missionaries of all groups and Government officials to co-operate together for the welfare of the people of the country.

Missionary work in the Northern Sudan has necessarily been mainly institutional, and the following is a summary of work actually organized. The C.M.S. and the American

¹ From the 1st October 1945 the Sudan was constituted a separate diocese with the Rt. Rev. A. M. Gelsthorpe as its first bishop.

Mission have from the beginning worked closely together and avoided duplicating their activities. Thus in Omdurman medical work and girls' education has been left to the C.M.S. and boys' education to the American Mission.

The work of the *Church Missionary Society* has centred in Omdurman, for although Khartoum is the seat of Government it is regarded by the Sudanese as a city of foreigners. Omdurman grew up out of the camp the Mahdi set up in 1884 for the investiture of Khartoum, and to-day the caravan routes from all over the kingdoms and provinces of the wider Sudan converge upon it. It is representative of all its peoples and tribes and is essentially the strategic centre for missionary enterprise, for where merchants gather other factors meet.

The C.M.S. medical work has steadily developed as an evangelistic agency from its difficult early beginnings and is deeply rooted in the life of the town. The Omdurman Hospital, whose establishment in 1914 and subsequent development was mainly the work of Dr. Edmund Lloyd, is the centre from which other social work radiates. It has seventy-five beds, with sections for men, women, and children; an Out-patient Department, with three clinics and a leper clinic. A well-developed feature of the hospital work has been the training of Sudanese men and women nurses, and a highly-trained Muslim staff has been produced, sustained in their service by common daily worship. In the hospital compound is also the Lee Stack Memorial Home for indigent and blind, which is financed by the Sir Lee Stack Memorial Fund and has thirty inmates. The Omdurman Poor Relief, financed by the Government, by which distribution of flour is made monthly to about one hundred and fifty of the poor of Omdurman, is also organized by the hospital.

The Abū-Rōf Outstation (1926) in the north of the narrow sprawling city, consists of a Dispensary for women and children, a Babies' Welfare Centre and children's home; all

under the charge of an English sister, with Sudanese nurses and welfare workers, which is visited regularly by a doctor. A girls' elementary school is situated in the same *hōsh* (compound). The whole is a community centre which influences all the families in the district.

The Abū-Kadōq Outstation in the south of Omdurman is a new centre in an uninfluenced area in charge of a sister, which started in 1940 as a Babies' Welfare Centre and a Dispensary for women and children, and is rapidly developing other types of work amongst women and girls.

The C.M.S. educational work for girls has three centres, at Omdurman (1905), Atbara (1908) and Wad Medani (1912). Each centre has a number of elementary schools, one intermediate and one secondary department. The work in the elementary schools, including kindergartens, which extends over six years, is directed especially to help them to become better wives and mothers, and through religious teaching to develop purpose in life. Apart from normal instruction the children are taught needlework and household crafts and an attempt made to give them wider interests. Teacher-training classes have been necessary in each of the three centres owing to the difficulty of getting parents to allow their daughters to go to other towns for training. Girls who wish to become teachers have a further year for teacher-training after they have taken their secondary certificate. The total number of girls in the various schools in 1941 was 1,205.

One of the important influences of Christian schools is that the missionaries seek to reach and influence the home life of the children by visiting after school hours. Other out-of-school activities, especially amongst old girls, now mothers themselves, are well-developed and consist of old girls' meetings, girl guide companies, net-ball teams, Bible study classes, needlework classes, preparatory and revisionary classes for teachers, and social service activities through a 'Guild of Help'.

The work of the *American United Presbyterian Mission* consists of:

A Boys' School in Omdurman giving elementary and intermediate education. In 1933 the Boys' Home started by the Giffens in Khartoum was moved to the same *ḥāsh* and became known as the McClurkin Boys' Home, after an American benefactor.

A Girls' Boarding School in Khartoum North (1908). Here the cottage boarding system has been successfully adopted, with four cottages each housing ten girls of varying ages and two teachers. Connected with the school is a Welfare Centre.

The J. Kelly Giffen School and Farm (1924) at Jeraif on the Blue Nile, five miles from Khartoum. A village school.

Bible Women's work in the homes of the 'three towns' and Wad Medani is a special feature of the Mission's work. In Omdurman is a school for their training called the Christian Training Home. The Bible Women give weekly lessons in reading and writing, with the Bible as the text-book, to Sudanese women in their own *ḥāshes*. They know, of course, that the women can never become Christians, but they hope to influence their home life and bring some measure of hope to lives condemned otherwise to the narrow boundaries of the *ḥarīm* outlook.

The Evangelical (Injili) Church of Egypt. A strong feature of the work of the American Mission has been the existence of a church from the beginning of its work. They were able to bring with them a pastor in the early days owing to the influx of members of this church into clerical posts in the Sudan. Urban congregations were organized, further pastors introduced and churches built in 'the three towns', Athara, Medani, and Port Sudan. These six churches were organized into a Presbytery in 1912. This church, whose members are mostly Egyptians, has a vigorous independent outlook. One pastor in Omdurman devotes his whole time to evangelistic

work amongst Muslims. When the Mission Boys' School was transferred to Omdurman the church decided to maintain their own school in Khartoum and some two-thirds of its pupils are Muslim.

Christian Literature. This arm of penetration has scarcely begun to be taken seriously in relation to the special needs of the Sudanese. The problem is less that of distribution as production. As far as distribution is concerned the S.P.C.K. has maintained a reading room since 1935 and a colporteur since 1939, and through their agency the books of the Christian Arabic presses of the Near East have received wide circulation. But there is a large possible reading public who cannot avail themselves of this literature. These are the semi-literates, the product of four years' elementary education, to whom Arabic literature is closed because of the nature of literary Arabic.¹ As an attempt to meet their need, a vocabulary of some 1,200 basic Arabic words has been produced by means of which it is hoped to provide reading material for semi-literates and later graded literature leading up to modern literary Arabic. This vocabulary is also being used in the Christian schools in the Nûba area.

The Bible Society, through its colporteurs, sells thousands of copies of the Scriptures every year, and is doing vital pioneer work in areas otherwise inaccessible to Christian influence. Because of the unique character of this penetration through the Scriptures it is hoped that this work will be extended.

The Roman Catholic Mission in the North Sudan, which recommenced in 1900, works mainly amongst Christians, as elsewhere where there is an urban Christian minority. No clearly-defined approach has been made to Muslims as such, following the principles of Cardinal Lavigerie and Charles

¹ In spite of the vast development of its vocabulary, written Arabic is a fossil language because of the way in which its grammar is tied down to the past and unable to evolve freely.

de Foucauld that the time is not at hand for such work. The Roman Catholic missionary aim is to establish the Church in stable form. This presupposes a considerable number of conversions and Muslim work is therefore unattractive and becomes subsidiary to other work.

To summarize, the early missionaries worked in faith against great obstacles, many of which have now been overcome. Conversions have been few, but fellowship has been established with Muslims in their search for God through the channels of Christian service, and so bridges have been built up which will one day enable the barriers of prejudice and misunderstanding on both sides to fall. The Sudan, in fact, has seen the foundations well and truly laid.

CHAPTER II

GOVERNMENT AND MISSIONS

In sketching the history of missionary work in the Northern Sudan, something has been said about Government policy towards missions and the way in which missions adjusted their work to the restrictions laid on them by that policy. It remains now to be shown how that policy arose out of the Government attitude towards Islam, what regulations now affect mission work, and, more generally, how that policy encourages the spread of Islam.

(a) *Neutrality or Favoritism?*

The Government when it took over the Sudan abandoned the policy of neutrality in religion (as practised, for instance, in India) and decided that the country being Muslim its Government must be regarded as Muslim. For instance, it was decided that since no Muslim Government would separate the secular from the religious side of life, especially in education, the educational system, instead of being secular, should be based on Islam without any consideration being paid as to whether orthodox Islam with its rigid system was a suitable basis for a modern system of education. The Sudanese, who had never betrayed much interest in orthodoxy, were thus to be moulded into the form of orthodox Muslims. So little were the feelings of the people considered that the *shari'a* courts were made to follow the Hanafi *madhhab*, though their traditional *madhhab* was the Māliki. This policy was in fact directed, less with a view to the good of the Sudanese, as to its effect upon Muslim opinion in

Egypt. The recognition of the *shari'a* has held up indefinitely the emancipation of Sudanese women.

Because no native princes were left in the Sudan the Government tended to foster the leaders of the religious orders, some of whom, such as the Mirghaniyya, helped during the reconquest. Their influence, though hereditary, is based on an unstable religious sentiment, not modified and stabilized as with secular leaders by land, subordinate chiefs, and orthodox religion. This has led to a policy of playing off one religious leader against another or against the *shari'a* leaders, and even direct interference in religious matters; a procedure which might lead to disaffection.

The Governor-General summed up the protective policy of the Sudan Government in a speech delivered to the 'ulama' at the outbreak of the 1914-18 War:

God is my witness that we have never interfered with any man in the exercise of his religion. We have brought the Holy Places within a few days journey of Khartoum. We have subsidized and assisted the men of religion. We have built and given assistance for the building of new mosques all over the country. Finally the Kadis and others have received a free and thorough education in the Koran and in the tenets of the Mohammedan religion.¹

The Government policy, protective to the extreme, led to interference in three spheres: (1) in general administrative and religious policy; in regard to officials, the cult, the religious orders, and foreign religious influence; (2) in the Islamic policy of government education; and (3) in religious law—as to what spheres should be ruled by the *shari'a*, customary and western laws.

Now whilst this policy of appeasement showed some understanding of the forces of Islam, that comprehension did not go deeply enough to the unappeasable nature of the system. Canon W. H. T. Gairdner expressed this when he wrote:

¹ Lord Lloyd, *Egypt Since Cromer*, Vol. I, p. 333.

It is an absolutely fixed principle, and will be so till the end of time, that, as long as Islam is Islam, so long will being governed by a non-Muslim power be unappeasably resented by Muslims. European Powers holding territory in Africa may as well make up their minds on this score. No amount of placency can alter the principle that has been formative of Islam since its very rise, and that underlies Islam still to-day.¹

We must remember that the term 'religion' calls up quite different perceptions with Muslims (and eastern Christians too) from those it calls up in western minds. Religion to a Muslim implies a social order, having its own distinct culture. We hear a lot of the 'brotherhood of Islam'. It is however a brotherhood to preserve the system, to bind its followers together over against the non-Muslim world. To a Muslim, Christians are not another type of believers, but an alien social group.

A Muslim therefore does not understand the official attitude towards Islam. The educated Muslim, it is true, is well aware of this official attitude. He often takes advantage of it. He realizes that the average official is thrown into a state of blue funk at the bogy of arousing Muslim fanaticism or of provoking an article in the Cairo Press, so the suave *bāsh-kātib* guides his D.C. for his own ends. He may succeed in establishing an Arabic school in a pagan area where there are half-a-dozen Muslims by showing how much Fulān-Bāshā is interested and his intention of writing to *Al Ahrām*. Yet even the educated Muslim does not realize how indifferent the administration really is to the spread of Christianity. He sees missionaries admitted even in the north and fully encouraged in the south, he sees his own religious law modified, and he ascribes it to what he regards as a perfectly natural pro-Christian attitude on the part of a 'Christian' Government. It is my experience that in spite of the Muslim policy of the Government, no Muslim, literate or illiterate,

¹ *Muslim World*, I, 187.

ever regards it as anything other than a Christian government. The following story, culled from Dr. Hall's *Journal*, throws an interesting light on the Muslim attitude. Dr. Hall was told that 'Lord Cromer gave £30 to the shaikh of the Omdurman mosque, who did not even say "thank you". When asked why, he said with scorn, "Do you think I would say 'thank you' to a *kāfir*?"' Dr. Hall concludes: 'M. said that this reply came to Lord Cromer's ear. I hope it did!'

It is noteworthy that all outbursts of fanaticism that have flared out have been against the Government and its officials, and not against missionaries. It is the Government which is Ad-Dajjal (anti-christ) and its officials who are *kāfirin* (unbelievers). The missionary is very closely in touch with the people and would naturally be the first to feel any anti-missionary feeling, but he is trusted by them. He moulds his policy to secure that trust. The Muslim is no fool. He knows that the missionary sincerely wishes to help him by healing and teaching. At the same time he is quite confident in the solidarity of his system. A Muslim respects the missionary for witnessing to his religion through his work, for asking the help of God before an operation in the hospital, and for building up the character of his children upon a basis of Christian morality. The Sudanese, too, judge the Government, not through its legislation, but through their contact with individual officials. They respect the official who is a Christian and not afraid to witness to it by a life of service, more than one who is indifferent to his faith and who to win their favour tells them *that all religions are alike*. In the Mahdiyya most Christians joined Islam from fear, but those who refused were not killed, except at a time of blood-lust such as the fall of Khartoum, which involved all non-Mahdists. The Mahdi is even said to have preached a sermon about the steadfastness of faith of the Copt, Rizq Allāh Shukri, who died at Berber under the present Government.

On the other hand, whilst the policy of protecting Islam—as though it needed protection—is to be deplored, no missionary is justified in blaming the official attitude in any degree for his own lack of success amongst Muslims. That is due to two factors: the missionary himself and the nature of Islam; or, in other words, to the foreignness of the Christianity with which he seeks to assault the fortress of the religio-social solidarity of Islam, tempered still harder in the flame of African fanaticism. Further, it should be pointed out, the Sudan has always had a strong body of officials of Christian character who could be relied upon, as far as their obligation to forward Government policy would allow, to help missionaries, or at any rate, not to put unnecessary obstacles in their way.

But the Government does lend its influence to the spread of Islam amongst pagans, less by deliberate favouritism, as by administrative and religious policies which play into the hands of Muslims. The official recognition of Islam, the honouring of Muslim feasts, the adoption of Friday as a public holiday, give prestige to the Muslim in the eyes of pagans; whilst up-country Muslim government staff and traders, the adoption of Arabic as the official language in the Nūba mountains, the recruiting of pagans into Muslim regiments, are all accessories to the spread of Islam.

A disturbing feature since 1939 has been the tendency of the Government to regard the *interest* veneer of Islam as a sufficient excuse to modify their policy of allowing Christian influence amongst pagans in borderland areas and thus curtail missionary work.

(b) *Legal Status of Missions*

In the Sudan Government Administrative Regulations we read:

No Mission station may be formed north of the 10th parallel of

North Latitude in any part of the Sudan which is recognized by the Government as Moslem.¹

Thus Regulation has remained unchanged since the re-occupation. It was originally imposed for fear of outbreaks of fanaticism in the interests of law and order. It is kept in the Regulations because of the supposed effect of its removal upon public opinion in Egypt. Mission work therefore is legally prohibited in the Northern Sudan, which remains a closed area.² There are no missions in the vast areas of Dārūr, Kordofān (except amongst the pagan Nūba), the Northern, Kassala and Red Sea provinces. On the other hand, as we have shown, the absolute character of the early restrictions has been relaxed. Two societies of experience amongst Muslims were allowed to undertake medical and educational work in certain towns where there were Christians, though they were not allowed at first to talk to Muslims about religion. But as Government officials came more into contact with missionaries and realized that the methods they use in Muslim lands are no danger to public security, their attitude changed and restrictions were relaxed. However, no other society has been given permission to work amongst Muslims, and this has materially hindered the social welfare of the country.

Restrictions on religious propaganda have remained. A permit would not be given to anyone styled an 'evangelist' to enter the Sudan, but a priest is allowed to enter to minister to his community. Public preaching in the open air is not allowed, but there are no restrictions on evangelistic work in Christian churches, private houses, schools or hospitals. In these cases no objection can be raised because of their voluntary and non-aggressive nature. Patients come voluntarily, for example, to a hospital where they know that heal-

¹ *Administrative Regulations*, 1933, chap. XV III, p. 133.

² 'Closed districts' comprise all spheres of missionary activity outside Omdurman (Closed Districts Order, 1932)

ing is concomitant with Christian prayer, provided that the missionaries are wise and do nothing to upset the feelings of the Muslim patients. That this has been adhered to by the C.M.S. hospital is proved by the place it holds in the community and the deep appreciation of the people for healing work with a spiritual background, which to them is part of the healing process.

No restrictions are placed on the importation and sale of the Bible and other Christian literature. Lord Cromer said in 1900, 'anyone might *sell* Bibles, but I cannot have people going about distributing Bibles and Testaments broadcast'.

Christian schools were naturally allowed in the towns where there were Christians. When Muslims wished to take advantage of such schools, Lord Cromer ruled that Muslim children should be admitted provided the parent or guardian gave his consent to the child receiving Bible lessons. The obtaining of written consent fell into disuse though the regulation was never rescinded. In 1927, owing to a complaint, this conscience clause was reinvoled, and the formula foolishly made to read that the father did not object to his son being taught the Christian religion. Naturally an outburst followed and children were withdrawn from the schools. The effendiyya however protested, and made it a cause against the Government's educational policy, asserting that they were trying to keep the people in ignorance. The order was therefore revoked and a new one produced whereby exemption from Bible lessons could be obtained 'by a parent who claimed the right. It ran:

That all parents desirous of the education of their children in Mission schools should, before their reception as pupils, be informed by the responsible school authorities that religious instruction will be given to the pupils unless objection is raised by the parents, in which case they will be exempted from attendance at prayers and religious instruction.

Parents in the past have availed themselves of an open

invitation to attend classes on religious instruction at any time, and have been entirely satisfied as to the non-propagandist nature of the teaching. Now they have complete faith in the character-building work of missionary schools.

The Government encourages the erection of buildings for worship and have facilitated the building of mosques everywhere by providing part of the cost, and consequently no restrictions have been placed on the building of churches provided there is a Christian community.

Missionaries accepted the restrictions which the Government imposed upon their work, believing them to be necessitated, from the Government's point of view, by temporary circumstances; but they have always understood them to be provisional, to be removed as soon as public-security allowed. Their 'provisional' character, we have seen, was recognized by Lord Cromer, but, though over forty years of British rule has elapsed in the Sudan, the anomalous regulation prohibiting mission stations north of latitude 10 deg., and these 'provisional' restrictions have not been removed, and therefore, in a strict sense, the principle of religious liberty, since freedom of action is withheld, cannot be regarded as fully recognized in the Sudan. The official interpretation of the limitation of missionary activity is always that it is in the interest of public order.

Yet it is paradoxical that, although the Muslim is protected against religious 'propaganda', yet on the other hand, since the missionary does not indulge in religious propaganda, the actual opportunity of witnessing to the Gospel in personal religious contact with Sudanese voluntarily is great. No missionary objects to the conscience clause in the schools, for, believing in religious freedom, he has no desire to preach to anyone who is unwilling to hear. Further, the official recognition of conversion shows that in fact the Government recognizes individual liberty of conscience. The position is better than in certain independent Muslim countries,

where the continuance of organized missionary activity is dependent upon fluctuating political factors.

Legal Status of Converts

Orthodox Islam does not recognize conversion from Islam and conversion is apostasy punishable by death. The Sudan was the first Muslim country which issued a procedure for the registration of conversion.¹ The extract from the Northern Sudan Legal Circular, 1912, runs as follows:

The following procedure shall be followed when a person desires to change his religion. The object of the procedure is to prevent quarrels arising between religious communities or allegations of compulsion or unfairness being made against Kadis, Priests or other religious heads, which might otherwise occasionally happen, especially if the applicants are minors or women. Converts or intending converts before formally being accepted in their new religion should apply to the Civil Authority of the place. And in like manner if they make application to an authority of the religion which they propose to adopt for formal admission into such religion he should pass their application to the Civil Authority in the place.

The Civil Authority shall inform the religious head of the community which the applicant wishes to abandon, if there is one present in the place, and arrange a convenient time when such a religious head may meet the applicant. After allowing the religious head a reasonable time to interview the applicant in private at the Government offices the Civil Authority shall ask the applicant in the presence of such religious head, whether he wishes to change his religion.

If the religious head declines to interview the applicant in the place, the Civil Authority shall record the fact in the proceedings and question the applicant if possible in the presence of two responsible members of his original religion.

The Civil Authority shall keep a record of the interview with

¹ Since the 1914-18 War, Palestine, the Lebanon and 'Irâq have similar procedures.

34 THE CHRISTIAN APPROACH TO ISLAM IN THE SUDAN
the applicant and must return the application to the religious
head who forwarded it without unnecessary delay.

This is not a law stating that all conversions must be registered. There is no Government register of converts. In the case of any dispute, if the above procedure had not been followed, it would always be sufficient in order to prove conversion to produce witnesses of baptism or the recital of the *shahāda*.

Change of religion is legally recognized in that the convert may justly claim the protection of the civil power from any consequences recognizable by the civil power. Muslim fanaticism in the Sudan however has made it difficult for Muslims, especially women, to become Christians because of the advertisement given to the proceedings by the above procedure.¹

In the Sudan, whilst the *shari'a* legal disabilities (laws such as inheritance, but not the death penalty for apostasy) hold, the convert is held to have left one community and joined another. This is the real abrogation of the *shari'a* which does not allow the fact of conversion at all. So Sudan religious laws on this matter show that the *shari'a* is not universal in the sphere of personal relationships according to the fiction of law in Egypt which only recognizes conversion to Islam.

This idea of change of community holds in that converts from Islam cannot claim their rights of inheritance, and a legacy to them by a Muslim is void. They retain their civil rights, but not those that come under the *shari'a*. It also holds in that a woman convert (who would normally be completely out of the pale) acquires the status of an independent Christian woman and does not come within the jurisdiction of the *shari'a* courts. The ruling is given that

¹ The Sudan needs an ordinance such as that of Palestine which gives legal effect to a change of religion that has already been made by notification of the fact to the local district commissioner (Ordinances No. 43 of 1927 and No. 31 of 1934).

except in so far as his (her) change in community affects the acquired rights of other parties, the convert becomes subject to the jurisdiction of the Courts administering the Personal Law of the community of his (her) adoption.

This means that jurisdiction in the matters of marriage, divorce, and alimony are exercised by the civil courts according to the law of the community of adoption. If a convert from Islam to Christianity died without leaving a will, his property would be administered according to the laws of his new community; e.g., if he had joined the Greek Church, according to Greek law; if the Church of England, according to English law which applies the personal law of the deceased; similarly with marriage and other regulations.¹ If the convert's will were disputed by his Muslim relations, the case would appear before the *shari'a* court and the convert would have to seek its transfer to the civil court.

At the same time the convert remains a Sudanese subject, not losing any civic or political rights, such as admission to public employments or the exercise of professions and industries.

To summarize the legal status of converts :

- (1) there is legal recognition of conversion on production of proof, but there is no formal procedure for the registration of converts, the Legal Circular being advisory to avoid trouble.
- (2) the convert acquires the rights of the community which

¹ *Laws of the Sudan*, Vol. III, p. 26.

§. Where in any suit or other proceeding in a Civil Court any question arises regarding succession, inheritance, wills, legacies, gifts, marriage, divorce, family relations, or the constitution of waqfs, the rule of decision shall be:

- (a) any custom applicable to the parties concerned, which is not contrary to justice, equity, or good conscience, and has not been by this or any other enactment altered or abolished and has not been declared void by the decision of a competent Court;
- (b) the Mohammedan Law, in cases where the parties are Mohammedans, except in so far as that law has been modified by such custom as is above referred to . . .

he (or she) joins, loses none of his civic rights and remains a Sudanese national.

- (3) a convert from Islam to Christianity cannot inherit or receive legacies from members of his former community because cases concerning the property of a Muslim must come before the *shari'a* court, which would not recognize the legality of legacies to non-Muslims.¹ But a convert from Christianity to Islam can inherit from his Christian parents.
- (4) the *shari'a* law of guardianship for women is that a woman shall remain under the guardianship of her nearest male relative until she has passed marriageable age. She is therefore not free to choose her own religion. The provision of the Legal Circular however provides for change of religion on the part of women (and minors) without specific legislation abrogating the *shari'a*.

Minors must reach their majority before there could be legal recognition of change.

Anyone who knows the difficulties of converts from Islam will realize that social attitude to the convert may qualify the observance of the law. However, the legal consequences of change of community do provide means of redress in cases of proved persecution recognizable by the civil courts.

¹ It should be noted that if the contentions of the *shari'a* doctors were correct that the *shari'a* does not recognize conversion and that a convert retains the privileges and responsibilities of a Muslim, it would be possible for him to claim his legal inheritance from his father.

However, since the civil courts hold that conversion is valid, the inheritance can be denied. The Sudan needs some law such as that of the Palestine Government which has declared in regard to inheritance that 'no change of religion or nationality on the part of the claimant or the deceased shall be taken into account' in questions of succession.

(*Succession Ordinance*, 1923, Pt. IV, Art. 23 (d) and cf. 24.)

CHAPTER III

MISSIONS AMONGST BORDERLAND PAGANS

Missionary work in the pagan Sudan is not a subject of study for this survey, but from the strategical point of view the advance of Christianity into fields which might have become spheres of Islamic influence affects the relative position of the two faiths. The missionary to Muslims is intensely interested in the growth of the Christian Church in Africa, not only because it is forestalling Islam but also because it is only through an African Church that African Muslims can be won. The test of the work of the southern missions will be whether Christianity can so claim the people that, with the inevitable loss of the old tribal spirit, there may be a re-orientation of the communal co-operative spirit round a new centre, leading to a new stability of tribal life which will give an impulse to flow out to the others.

We will sketch here the Government policy towards missions amongst pagans and the present position as regards missionary occupation so far as it concerns the tribes in the dangerous area bordering on the Muslim north, and including the great Nilotic tribes. The bulk of Christian missionary work is concentrated amongst the tribes further south, and it may be said that, as the Uganda Mission stopped the spread of Islam among the Baganda, so the Southern Sudan Missions, aided by the 'Southern Policy' of the Sudan Government,¹ are stopping Muslim penetration from sweeping round the less impressionable Nilotes and embracing tribes

¹ See Appendix for an official definition of the Government's 'Southern Policy', pp. 71-73.

such as the Moru and Azande. As a result of the slave-trade there was almost complete tribal disintegration amongst the tribes known as 'Fertir' in the western Bahr al Ghazāl. Some groups (Kraish, Foroghi, Banda, etc.) of the highlands south of Dārūr became Muslim, and their chiefs still claim the religion and use a form of Arabic. In the early days of mission work in the south the missionaries found Islamic influence in even the remotest areas and northern emissaries moving about actively proselytizing. Archdeacon Shaw, writing in 1909, said, 'unless all these black tribes are evangelized within the next few years they must inevitably become Mohammedans'. That danger has now passed.

For several decades Islam was alone in the field: northern Sudanese merchants still perpetuate its influence and from time to time it has been reinforced in the country districts by the return of disbanded battalions nominally at least Mohammedans. It has been surprisingly sterile. The Nupi of Gondokoro and Nimule (the descendants of Emin's soldiery) are, as in Uganda, self-consciously Mohammedans, but there has been no wholesale adoption of the religion, as, for instance, in the West Nile District of Uganda; it is practically confined to the river stations such as Mongalla and Rejaf, and manifests itself mainly by sporadic cases of female circumcision.¹

Lord Cromer, after the reoccupation of the Sudan, offered to Missions 'spheres of influence' in the pagan south and defined the only possible Government attitude as one of 'strict and tolerant impartiality'. The Government itself for a long while made no attempt to do educational work in this area, but in 1926 a scheme of education in collaboration with the missionary societies was undertaken, an inspector appointed and subsidies granted to missions. Since there were no educated southerners the alternative would have been to send Muslim teachers, and this, because of the unsuitability of northerners on the grounds of standards of pay and

¹ *Tribal Survey of Mongalla Province*, edit. L. F. Nalder, 1937.

housing and of the morally disintegrating forces of Islam, could not be considered.¹

The only Muslim *ma'mūrs* left in the south are at Renk, Malakal, and Waw. Waw at one time exhibited all the features of a degenerate northern *sūq* town; now after the change in Government policy, with its exclusion of Donqolāwī merchants, it has closer affinities to a town in Uganda.

Following the decision of the Government to co-operate with missions, a most important step was taken at the Rejaf Language Conference in 1928. A debased form of Arabic, known as Mongaltese, which was in no sense a *lingua-franca* but a pidgin Arabic, is used in the south, but at the Rejaf Conference the Government abandoned any idea of making Arabic the language of official work and chose English instead. Had Arabic been chosen nothing could have stopped the spread of Islam.

The problem in the Nūba mountains, although pagan, was somewhat different. Because the area looks northwards both economically and administratively, Arabic was adopted as the language of education and administration. The area has therefore become the most important testing ground of Christian missions in the Sudan. The declared policy of the Government in this area from 1931, when it invited the C.M.S. to undertake educational work, until 1941, was 'to build up an indigenous Nūba culture under Christian influence'. In recent years they have modified their policy because of fear of being thought too partial to Christians, although northern Muslims had never concerned themselves with the former policy.

In the south in general the Government's policy of

¹ The basis of education is through subgrade or 'bush' schools, of which there were 451 in 1938, with 37 Elementary, 3 Trades, 2 Normal and 18 Girls' schools. Intermediate schools have been started at Busere (R.C.), Okara (R.C.), Loka (C.M.S.) and Abwang (Government) in order to provide men for Government posts. Internal pressure for both educational and economic advance is becoming much more vocal in the south, and the whole question is now (1944) under consideration by the Government.

civilization through missionary agency has been consistent, since it has never been faced in any degree with Muslim communities causing modification of policy by exciting fear of questions in the Egyptian Parliament.¹

Egypt, it is true, has tried to make use of this fostering of Christian missions in the south in her political campaign to increase her influence in the Sudan. Artin wrote in 1911: 'it appears that certain Moslems of Cairo also bestirred themselves to secure a zone for missionary enterprise, and that the Government replied that all they had to do was to send the missionaries, who would have meted out to them the same facilities as the Christian missionaries, but as the necessary organization was non-existent, the matter dropped.'²

Other requests have followed and have received the same answer, with the provision that they agreed to do the wider social work done by Christian missions, such as the provision of educational and medical facilities, and agreed to Government requirements as regards buildings, qualified staff, and so on. Needless to say, there has been no response.

As regards missionary occupation, the weak area is that between lat. 10 deg. N. and 12 deg. N., where the Nūba-Funj communities are in grave danger of being absorbed into Islam.

Work amongst Nūba commenced when the Sudan United Mission opened work in the eastern hills amongst the Krongo at Haibān in 1920. They have since opened stations at Abri (Koalib), Kauda (Tora and Tira), Moro, Tabanya, and Rom (opposite Kodok, amongst the Dinka). The C.M.S. has opened two stations in the western hills at Salāra (Nyamang group) in 1935 and Katcha (Kaduqli) in 1938.

¹ Under the present régime mosques have been built at Renk, Kadok, Waw and Jūba; the last as a result of political pressure from Egypt. They are an alien element used mainly by Ja'aliyyin merchants.

² Y. P. Artin, *England in the Sudan*, p. 35.

East of the Nile, missionary work only commenced¹ with the arrival of the Sudan Interior Mission in 1938 after their expulsion from Abyssinia by the Italians. They have now the following stations amongst the Mabān, Uduk, and Dinka: *Banjang*, some eighteen miles south of Renk in the 'bottle-neck'; *Melut*, taken over from the Sudan United Mission; *Abayāt*, thirty-five miles from Melut on the Kirmuk road; *Chāli al Fil*, near Kirmuk (this is also on the stream of Muslim influence); *Doro*, near the Government Police Post at Boing.

Amongst the Nilotic tribes south of lat. 10 deg. N. the American United Presbyterian Mission opened a station among the Shilluk at Doleib Hill on the Sobat in 1902, another among the Nuer at the trading station of Nāšir on the Upper Sobat in 1912 and a third amongst the Anuak at Akobo in 1939.

The C.M.S. have stations among the Zeraf Nuer at Juai Bor (1936) and the Dok Nuer at Ler (1932); amongst the Bor Dinka at Malek (1906), the Agar Dinka at Akot (1929) and the Gok Dinka at Gel River (1942).

The Roman Catholic Mission stations among the Nilotics are situated at Lul, Detwok, and Tonga amongst the Shilluk, and at Yoinyang amongst the Nuer.

¹ Except for S.U.M. stations on the White Nile amongst the Dinka at Melut and Rom.

CHAPTER IV

THE CHALLENGE OF THE PRESENT OPPORTUNITY

1. *Relationship of Regional Survey to Method*

Missionaries are facing real issues and not abstract theory. If their approach to Muslims is to be vital it is necessary that they should know and understand the people whom they serve: their ethnology and environment, language, and institutions, customs and psychology. They also need to know something of the influences brought to bear upon them, such as Islam and western culture and administration, and the reactions of the people to these influences.

My survey of *Islam in the Sudan* is an attempt to bring such things together so that those who claim to lead may not be blind guides. Just as the aim of diagnosis is treatment, so the aim of such a survey is service. Fundamental thinking and co-operative planning and action are needed more perhaps in this field than anywhere else. To make use of the survey needs actual vivid contact with the people and their institutions in a way which will not be described in abstract words and cannot be classified on paper. From it may issue the search for natural and not artificial means of approach. It is art rather than science since our ultimate interest is the infinitely diverse, elusive, human soul. Only in living contact with the people shall we form clarified ideas, willed and laboured towards realization in practice.

Although it is true that Christians have a perpetual call to witness in areas where there is little visible result, and though there may be no immediate way for us to change the situation fundamentally, we are not thereby excused from

seeking in each Muslim area for those local peculiarities of thought, feeling and action which can most readily escape from the entail of past centuries. The acknowledged difficulty of the spiritual task must make us all the more careful that it is not hindered by anything faulty or foreign in method or presentation.

Above all, the Christian doctrine of crisis must keep us ready. 'In an hour that ye think not, the Son of Man cometh.' We shall be like servants sitting up all night for their master, not knowing when he will come. At any moment God's redemptive purpose may be disclosed in ways beyond our power to foresee. Therefore let us be expectant and ready.

Let us begin by frankly admitting that we have found no solution. Beginning with sincerity, we shall strive for a closer relation of words with needs and indicate the way to experimental deeds. We are seekers and we cannot even sense the new dawn, but we are not afraid of being in the dark. We know that in the last resort the words of Ramón Jull remain true for all time:

*It is my belief, O Christ! that the conquest of the Holy Land should be attempted in no other way than as Thou and Thy Apostles undertook to accomplish it—by love and prayer, by the shedding of tears and blood.*¹

We have no certainty that Muslims will accept Christ in the next hundred years or even in the next hundred thousand years, but, as Pascal says, 'if we were to do nothing except for a certainty, we would do nothing for religion, for it is not certain.'² Let us then venture and leave the issue to God.

2. *The Stubbornness of Islam to Christian Influence*

The question of the validity of missions to Muslims does

¹ *Contemplation of God*, cxii, 250.

² 'S'il ne falloit rien faire que pour le certain, on ne devroit rien faire pour la religion; car elle n'est pas certaine' (*Œuvres complètes de Blaise Pascal*, 1677, Vol. I, p. 379).

not arise. The divine commission to preach the Gospel is imperative. The choice is not made *by* us, but *for* us. Only the conviction that God has revealed ultimate truth in Jesus Christ can keep us undiscouraged when our work shows so little visible results. Dr. H. Kraemer has written:

Islam's great function has been, and will probably continue to be for the present and for the immediate future, to remind the Christian Church that Christian missions, if they will be really Christian, that is to say, if they spring from the apostolic obligation towards a divine commission, are not primarily driven by motives of spiritual conquest or success, but by the urge towards faithful and grateful witness to Christ.¹

The stubbornness of Islam to Christianity we have already shown is due to two things: the nature of Islam and the foreignness of the Christianity presented to the Muslim. Or, in other words, it is due to the seeming irrelevancy to life of the Christianity with which the western missionary seeks to assault the religio-social solidarity of Islam, tempered in the flame of African fanaticism.

We have shown how the body of Islam is syncretistic, welded into one unified system, the original prophetic element giving validity and solidarity to the popular religion of the East and Africa which it has absorbed. Islam as a spiritual agency is superficial, and yet membership of the system has the power to call forth a feeling of religious superiority, blind devotion and intolerant fanaticism in adherents who know nothing of its sanctions and never observe its precepts.

The reason for the impregnability of Islam, as H. Kraemer has pointed out, is that group solidarity is its real God. *Din* (religion) in Islam means a spirit of devotion to the ideal of social unity shown in concrete in the *umma* (community). Christianity and Islam have been opposed throughout his-

¹ *The Christian Message in a Non-Christian World*, p. 353.

tory as two rival social systems, of which the older churches are a reminder. This rivalry has been intensified by the fact that Islam came after Christianity and that antagonism to it is part of its creed. In conflict with the modern world that unity has not been weakened, for Islam has come to be used as a social and political asset to promote nationalistic ends. Deeply rooted inhibitions of blood, culture, sentiment and custom, work together to deter any inquirer after truth, making it a terrible act of betrayal to leave the system. Christianity is entangled in the Muslim mind with Westernism and European Imperialism, and the Muslim feels with an unconscious antagonism that the missionary, too, belongs to that world; so *tabshir* (evangelization) is identified in his mind with *isti'mār* (colonization and foreign rule), and therefore distrusted and feared. That mistrust is based on valid grounds too, because the modern Protestant missionary movement is historically an aspect of the western penetration which forced Islam to a state of defensive consolidation. The influence of the West on Islam, so great in many spheres, has been negative and reactionary in the religious sphere.

3. *The Approach to Islam in the Past*

The second great obstacle, we have said, is the irrelevancy to the life of the Muslim of the Christianity presented. The approach of the last century missionaries to Islam was based on controversy. In their assault on Islam they would admit nothing good and gave a dogmatic presentation of Christianity. They thought that it was their work to attack and break down the Islamic religious system, and their method was developed accordingly. They took over the Islamic theory of revelation based on the infallibility of the Bible as the Word of God, as Revelation itself, instead of as the witness to the Revelation. They sought to prove to the Muslim by argument and controversy that Christianity was

better, and to force an intellectual assent. They failed, for they were fighting on the Muslim's own ground; new barriers were raised up and the Muslim took its militant method to be an attack upon the social system. This method was negative. It did not follow that emptying a Muslim of his religious inheritance would lead to a positive acceptance of Christianity, nor did it prepare that common ground which is essential before the message of the Revelation in Christ can be heard.

This method was modified in time to the presentation of Christianity as the only way of salvation in the hope that the Muslim might be persuaded of its worth and become a Christian. This, which may be called the 'atonement approach', has been pressed to the limit, and is still very strong owing to the 'fundamentalist' influence so prevalent in this field.

A modern or 'leavening approach' has developed as a reaction from the above method, though it has scarcely superseded it even in thinking. This arises out of the liberal attempt to find 'common values' upon which a mutual understanding can be built, and has had valuable results in that it has taught the missionary to try to understand the religion of the people. The idea is advanced of using these common values and permeating the system with the spirit of Jesus Christ and so changing it from within. This shows a lack of understanding of both Islam and Christianity. Christianity is thought of as a purely personal spiritual experience, and Islam simply as 'communal environment', therefore it is suggested that the Muslims can be given a Christian spiritual experience within the communal environment and thus revolutionize it from within. The vast developments in popular religious experience within the Islamic system show that Islam must of necessity cater for certain human needs, but it is not realized that only that can be accepted within the system which is at harmony with its own inner spirit. The

dynamic of Christ's working in the Christian environment does inevitably become the wraith of a *nabi 'Isā* within the Muslim environment.

Our preaching to Muslims therefore falls upon deaf ears because it seems to them irrelevant to life as they know it. Our preaching is directed to needs which the Muslim does not recognize as his needs. Some missionaries have sought to bring home to the Muslim a sense of sin, and therefore *his need for salvation; but as H. Kraemer has pointed out, 'not the consciousness of sin brings men to Christ, but the continued contact with Christ brings them to consciousness of sin.'*¹ Again, great stress has been placed upon Christianity as an ethic, but its primary message has never been the proclamation of a higher ethical ideal; the Gospel is not about what ought to be, but an interpretation of what happened, of how the eternal entered into history; and Christianity is this revelation of a new reality or it is nothing.

The basic fault is that missionaries have had a too individualist conception of religion, blindness to the communal conception of religion in the East and wrong ideas of the process of religious change. They presented Christianity as a complete break from one cultural group to another. This for the convert meant the loss of all life's safeguards, of his normal and natural adjustment to life into which he was born, and into which he fits naturally by tradition. Change of religion is much less a change of religious belief than of one's social system, and involves social ostracism and loss of *cultural stability, economic security and life's safeguards. It is useless to speak of the richness of the new religious experience in Christ if it involves social discontinuity. Since the hearer is concerned only about immediate values Christian preaching falls on deaf ears. Other methods must be found of showing the reality of Christian life-values in living*

¹ *Op. cit.*, p. 345.

contact with, and as far as possible within, indigenous life. Anglo-Saxon Protestant missions cannot possibly succeed amongst Muslims as they have done amongst pagan Africans with whom the cultural complex was in process of disintegration through the impact of westernism. The Islamic social system has not been undermined, but rather has intensified its solidarity in face of the external threat. If the Islamic system were to break up and Muslims thereby lost their life-safeguards, then Christian missions and Communism would have a clear field. But our task is not the destructive one of undermining the system, and other non-militant methods must be adopted to show that Christ can transform the existing state of Muslim society.

- The development of missionary work in the Muslim
- / Sudan has been rather opportunist in character. Opportunities have been seized for establishing educational and social welfare institutions whenever the way opened. A future Sudanese Church was never fully anticipated and missionary work planned in relation to it. The result is that the work has been lop-sided and rigid in form. Each section or institution has gone its own way, and there has been little co-ordination of effort. This institutional emphasis has conditioned mission work because side by side with mission institutions parallel government institutions have arisen. Consequently mission institutions have had to be well run, with adequate staff and proper equipment; and missionaries, harassed by many duties, have been left with little time to devote to their own training and direct work. Mission institutions in the Sudan have preceded those of the Government, otherwise they would have had no *raison d'être*, and the Government has shown itself ready to profit by the experience gained by their pioneer work. These institutions continue, through the quality of mission personnel and native staffs trained in Christian ways of service, to hold a unique position in the eyes of the populace, and offer a standard and exercise means of

service unsatisfied by the corresponding Government institutions.

This absorption in institutional work, however, has led to Christian social service and education becoming too much an end in itself, and evangelistic work has been almost a by-product. It has become so, on the one hand, because of its conditioning by Government policy and, on the other, because of the frustration and malaise felt by the missionary as a result of the apparent ineffectiveness of the direct approach, assisted by the pragmatist emphasis of Protestant missions. This was the state of deadlock reached at the beginning of the war. The effort to maintain institutions under war conditions forced missionaries to reconsider their place in a country where the Government is going ahead in a policy of social welfare and education. They found that it is not enough to teach and heal, which still leave the westerner separate from the people. That led to a realization that the whole of missionary policy must be re-orientated in the light of the primary aim of Christian missions—the establishment of the visible church.

4. *The Re-Orientation of the Missionary Approach in the Sudan*

With the development of the Christian Church in the south, we in the Sudan are faced with the imminent meeting of a Sudanese Christianity and a Sudanese Islam. The Church of the south, freed as it is from the race problem which arises where there is a white settlement, will be favourably placed when it becomes the official religion of the south.

It is our task in the north to prepare for that day. We shall seek (1) to establish Christian centres in all borderland areas where Islam is in contact with paganism; and (2) to establish Christian centres in the lands of entrenched Islam so that the Christianity of the south will have points of contact when it flows northwards.

We are concerned here with method in achieving the second of these two aims.

The missionary will realize in view of past hindrances that he is primarily out to demonstrate that his motive is not conquest, but witness. Conquest is the wrong attitude, not only because it arouses antagonism, but also because, if the motive and attitude is competitive, then Christian missions lose their real validity. The ultimate issue depends upon whether in time Christianity can do fuller justice to the genuine values of Islam, than Islam to those of Christianity. Christianity should surely progress by its own inner constraint to share, and not by self-conscious Christian missions. Only to the extent that the missionary is free from that self-consciousness, and motivated by the impulse to give what matters most to him, will his work be truly fruitful.

This involves a new orientation of our primary aim in our approach to the Muslim. One missionary society in the Sudan adopted the following aim in an attempt to avoid the mistakes of the past: 'We believe that our primary aim in our great spiritual crusade for the world of Islam is so to live and work that people may follow Christ and find new life in Him.' To this the corollary was added, 'we realize that we have no power of ourselves to lead people to a new life, it is the work of the Holy Spirit to bring men to a new birth and so into new life'.

This aim may not be fully adequate since it ignores the social side of religion, but it is evidence of the change of missionary outlook to a truer humility. Perhaps the following aim would be more complete: Our aim is to present Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit that men may find new life in Him and accept Him as Saviour in the fellowship of the Church.¹

The first condition of approach then is a living faith and

¹ This is a modification of the definition of evangelism given by the *Archbishops' Committee of Inquiry on the Evangelistic Work of the Church*, 1918.

a call rooted in Jesus Christ. Along with that he who seeks direct contact with the Muslim needs a clear view of what he has to offer; and this few possess.

The second condition of approach is adequate preparation. The missionary needs a real knowledge of the means of expression, ways of life and mode of thought of the Muslim. This preparation, which can only be done on the field itself, is a long one.

Given then the apostolic urge to witness and the background knowledge of the language, ways of life and thought of the people, there is a fundamental principle of approach which involves the missionary in a new dimension. From the beginning he should recognize that his way of thinking about spiritual things and the social forms he carries around with him, are possibly inapplicable to the life and thought of African Muslims, and that he needs to translate these into their terms and forms. If he could do that retranslation, there would be some possibility that the Muslim might recognize their relevancy to his own life. Sudanese Muslims have been confronted with a westerner's religion whose agents did good works which were truly welcomed and keenly appreciated, but they have never been challenged by Christianity as the revelation of a new reality to life as they know it.

Yet experience of Christianity can give to the life of the African a re-creation which Islam cannot give. It can change the very rhythm of his life, whilst Islam condemns him to a staticism from which escape seems almost impossible. The tragedy is that our method of presenting Christ was as static and lifeless as the Qur'ân and even less related to the inner needs and life of the Sudanese.

Thus missionaries came to realize that mission policy and missionary method must be determined not by what the missionary with his western training thinks it desirable for the Muslim to know, and what social form he thinks Sudanese Christianity should take, but what he must tell and

what he must do in order that the hearer can absorb God's revelation; and this involved creative translation into both the mental and social means of indigenous expression.

This the missionary as an alien unit could not do, and therefore means had to be found for making this translation into indigenous terms and social life.

The Northern Sudan has always looked both northwards and southwards. It has been influenced as much by the south as the north, and to-day large sections of the population are a composite race—Arab-Negroid-Hamite.

In the Sudan, as contrasted with Egypt, Palestine, and Syria, Christianity was completely wiped out. Missionaries therefore had no indigenous Christian Church to which they could turn for national helpers. The result was that in so much of their missionary thinking in the past they looked northward because of the comparatively recent, though deeply rooted, background of Islam. They remembered the Arab, but not the basic Negroid-Hamitic blood. They drew their methods and evangelists from the Muslim north. Their non-European evangelistic staff were men and women who had been trained or brought up in Islamic countries and had a background of centuries of Islamic life and tradition, but who, because of this heritage, were oppressed by the dead weight of Islam and filled with the inertia engendered by the seeming impossibility of breaking in upon its jealously guarded unity.

The work of the Injili Church of Egypt is a case in point. This is a young Church built up almost entirely of 'converts' from the Coptic Church. Pastors came in the first place to care for its Egyptian members working in the Sudan; though the American missionaries had the wider view of the Church becoming an instrument of evangelization. The background of the Injilis, which is quite understandable, had not given them the kind of faith to challenge Islam, nor had it freed them from fear of it. Pastors and members alike looked back

to Egypt as home and regarded their stay in the Sudan as exile. This attitude the American Presbyterian missionaries have always tried to break down, but they have failed. Again, the Arab Anglican Church in Palestine showed even less missionary spirit than the Injili Church and failed to respond to an appeal for missionaries to work in the Sudan.

It is a just criticism that evangelism has no basis and therefore loses its force if it does not spring forth from a church filled, not only with Christian life, but above all with such Christian life as will act as a living witness to the renewing power of the Gospel. This the younger churches of the Near-East have not fulfilled.

From the Near-East, therefore, the only hope was from a rebirth of both the older and younger churches, and this was too vague a hope upon which to plan for the future.

The experience then of church and evangelistic work in the Sudan had resulted in the collection together of a few city congregations of foreigners, but very few Sudanese. These churches were unrelated to the life of the land and in no way contributed to it. No blacks really felt the church to be their home. The Arabic-speaking near-easterner, under the heavy pressure of inherited knowledge, was not able to understand and guide this continually evolving mixed race, and was in many ways as much cut off from them as western missionaries. His method of presenting his message to the local Muslim, based upon that given in other Muslim lands, was ineffective, for so many of their customs and thought-processes are African.

It was impossible, therefore, to continue to wait for this witness from the north. Our need was for men and women free from the spiritual apathy of near-eastern Christianity and the paralysing background of fear of Islam, yet men and women ethnically akin to the Sudanese.

The disappearance of the church in the Sudan showed that it is useless to plant a church unless it become truly

indigenous. But confronting the failure of Christianity, we had the success of Islam, which by adopting African forms had become an indigenous religion. Christianity could only become indigenous in the same sense, rooted in the very life of the country, if it were an African Christianity surging up in new power through African missionaries filled with that life of the Holy Spirit which is so evident in Central Africa. We felt that we should cease looking northwards to the lands of embedded Islam and stretch out our hands southwards to those lands in Africa where the Holy Spirit was actually changing men's lives.

The name *Bilād as Sūdān*—Land of the Blacks—remained in our minds, remembering further, as our wider hope, that their country was still the border-land and the way to Egypt and the East. Muslims have no race discrimination and the Arabs who entered the Sudan intermarried with Hamite and Negro and accommodated themselves to African life; so Islam became indigenous. Missionaries and Near-Easterners do not do this, and so do not encourage the return of an indigenous Christianity.

Again, in the Sudan the inner-life of the people is controlled by an animism less Islamic than African—a background not understood by missionaries, but almost certainly understandable by an African Christian whose background is probably still animistic.

The need here was for African Christian pastors who still believed in the power of the spirits, but who had conquered their fear of them in Christ; men who, in their African ways of life, would reveal the life-giving power of Christ and open the way for Him to penetrate the existing form of Sudanese life and transform it. Western and Eastern Christians have done valuable work in the Sudan in changing attitudes. They may still be of use as leaders for a time and as helpers in specialist work, provided they are witnesses first and foremost, but they cannot be the spearhead of advance. The

main emphasis should be placed on the possibilities of evangelism through the African Christian to the African Muslim.

How was this to be done?

The aim of every mission is to build up in the country in which it is working a native Church composed of men and women reborn in Christ. As T. S. Eliot asks in *The Rock*:

What life have you if you have not life together?

There is no life that is not in community,

And no community not lived in praise of God.

Since religion in Africa is social and since the Church must have its roots in the soil of the land, it was necessary to form and develop an African Christian community which could demonstrate in the midst of the Muslim population how community life could be both fertile and stable. This community would be composed, not at first of converts from Islam, as all previous outlooks pictured, but of *converts from paganism*.

In Omdurman and many other centres there are large numbers of blacks from the south, mainly Nuba, Moru, Bari, and Dinka, who have come north in search of adventure and through lack of opportunity in the south. A few of these are settled and have become Muslims by the natural process of absorption into their new environment, others make up the casual labour market and move about in search of work; while the majority, after acquiring enough money to buy cattle for the bride-price, return to their native tribe. Vast numbers of pure negroids in Omdurman are ex-slaves and all these are nominal Muslims.

Although the process of Islamization proceeds naturally among these blacks, Muslims were not so blind as we were in the method of an active approach to them. Those who work in the houses as servants are compelled to adopt Muslim names and often taught to pray. Many of them are eager to learn the elements of reading and writing, and evening

classes have been opened for them in various parts of Omdurman. There is one at the Ahfād School, where they are taught first of all the methods of ablution and the times and motions of *ṣalāt*, then the actual prayers, and finally, if still attending, a little reading and writing.

Black pastors and teachers were felt to be the key-men upon whom the whole programme for the indigenization of the Church depended. We westerners alone cannot hope to express Christianity in living language to these blacks, but the black missionary can do it. We could not hope to work on any sound basis unless we could enlist the services of black missionaries. The C.M.S. was able to make a beginning through being lent a pastor from the Evangelical Church of Egypt, who was a Shilluk in origin and a convert from Islam. The C.M.S. hospital in Old Cairo enriched the Omdurman hospital by sending a doctor of Dinka origin who was also a convert from Islam; whilst a black woman evangelist and welfare worker, Darfurian in origin, was also found. African missionaries should be married so that Christian family life will be presented before the Muslim, not as a thing remote from all experience, but as a realizable ideal. We westerners will have to give them adequate training and self-sacrificing support in their work.

We decided that our immediate approach should be to the more recently arrived blacks, some of whom were Christians or had been in touch with missions. These were lonely, despised, detribalized, no longer restricted by the rules of the group and held menial occupations. The *merisa*-houses are full of Nūba servants. These southerners, freed of tribal restraints, often go to the bad. The Government cannot return them to the south if they wish to stay. These it was decided to approach, organize, train and form into a community. Two clubs were opened for them in Khartoum and Omdurman. Regular services were held and Christian instruction given. As they developed they became the natural

centres of gravitation for others coming north, many of whom were thus saved from debauchery and Islam. The majority were migrants who were preserved, through the maintenance of their Christian life in the midst of a prevailing Islam, from returning to be a debasing and disintegrating element in the life of their tribes. But for others the Church became a new life-centre, and a small Christian community is being built up. The first baptism of three Morus and one Nūba took place in Omdurman in 1943. Whilst individual conversion owing to the character of Christianity is essential, yet as soon as there was a group of two or three they were confronted with the challenge of Christ as a community. The Church thus became for them a new life-centre. Unlike Muslims, they did not have to renounce their security on becoming Christians; they had already lost it when they left their tribe.¹

The development of the community because of economic needs may take the form of a Christian-colony, but care is being exercised to ensure that it does not have an artificial character by the segregation of converts. The majority work outside the mission as servants in the main, though two or three who knew English well have obtained good posts in Government offices. Not is this work taking the form of a purely sociological experiment, because everything is being allowed to develop freely with the environment. We do not want the framework of a Christian society without a Christian content.

But as the community develops we shall have to offer

¹ *Thinking in terms of the group-life of Islam, since we cannot approach the group, it seems wrong to separate individuals from their community, keeping them in isolation from the basis of their communal life, for the purpose of building up a church. On the other hand, the approach to isolated southerners, whether Muslim or Pagan, is fully justified because they are already isolated and their lives have a chance to become integrated in the new community as it develops. Once it can offer a true home to the northern Muslim convert, with the possibility of re-creation in a Christian community, then the extraction becomes justifiable*

economic security. It is absurd to expect a community of Christians to exist in the midst of a vast Muslim population without considering from the outset its economic adjustment. Mr. Merle Davis, in the Madras Report,¹ stresses the hitherto hardly recognized fact that evangelism, education and social service (medicine, welfare, etc.) can only make their full contribution in so far as they are carried on by a community which takes full account of the economic environment. Therefore, from the beginning, expert opinion from outside, and study, planning and experiment by missionaries, will be vital to the development of the community.

Large numbers of Egyptian and other Eastern Christian families employ southerners, and southerners should also leaven and eventually replace the Muslim staff of missionary institutions, but reliance upon such absorption alone would be too haphazard. In the city it will be necessary to develop small unit and home industries, such as woodwork, pottery, and tile-making—the ancient Sudanese Christians produced hand-painted pottery. These industries should be as far as possible related to the life of the whole environment. For the women there might be a laundry, weaving and mat-work, which could be marketed through a mission industries room and bazaar. The immediate planning would be the work of the missionary technical expert, since the industries must be related to easily accessible raw material. Expert training and guidance will always be necessary and there will be the problem of marketing the products.

The individual Christian black is helpless if he stands alone in the midst of a predominantly Muslim population, but in such a community, breathing a Christian atmosphere, he need not feel isolated; and, further, such a recognized community, built upon a sound economic basis, will offer a united front to the world. But our hopes go further than

¹ Vol. V, *The Economic Basis of the Church*, pp. 415-58.

this. A living church will inevitably be a witnessing church and it is our hope that the community, remaining African but breathing a new spirit, will witness by its very life and draw others to itself.

The community then from the beginning was planned to be self-supporting. Since some of the southerners who were not working as servants in houses had to be accommodated at the clubs to save them from the demoralizing influences of Muslim lodging houses, the need for a hostel soon arose, and one was built in 1945 in the Omdurman club grounds.

Ability to read and write is an important step towards the economic development of the group, and night classes were started from the beginning, whilst opportunity for further training and work is being provided for the occasional bright lad who arises out of the mass of mediocrity. The community is being led to recognize early that the support of the Church is its own responsibility. The actual social pattern of the community is developing freely with the environment, and the right cultural synthesis will be the result of living development to which the Christian way of life will be adjusted. We are not so unwise as to expect or demand at the outset a full-grown Christian life, nor conformity to western standards of morality. We are finding that teaching the Christian way of life is of infinitesimal value compared with what is assimilated from the way of life of the group. Their becoming Christians throws them into a new world of perpetual renewal by means of which they may grow gradually to the stature of full-grown men in Christ.

Western leadership will continue only as long as necessary, but western oversight and guidance must continue for some time owing to the group's position in a great Muslim centre. It is the aim of the western missionary to pave the way and stimulate the growth of a community which will express an African Christianity. The community is attracting migrant blacks from the south, who join it naturally without effort.

Correspondence and co-operation is maintained with missions in the Nūba Mountains and Southern Sudan, so that the group can be put into touch with Christians and pagans coming north and that those who return may be followed up.¹ In the case of migrants who return south, instead of their returning to become a debasing and disintegrating element in the tribe, their contact with a Christian city community life may help to widen the tribe's outlook and further its prosperity.

In view of our aim that the church should be a witnessing church, one very important thing is being kept in mind. Experience in other fields has taught us that the community should, from the very outset, become conscious of its responsibility for Muslim evangelism and take an active share in it. It speaks much for the work of southern missions that, though by no means their best members come north, yet the majority are self-consciously proud of their religion and quite unafraid of avowing it, even though that sometimes means they lose their job or are subject to persecution.

The challenge of the southerners, which brought to missionaries the realization that there could indeed be a Church of Sudanese in the north, has revolutionized their attitude towards established institutions. They thought of them, not as a rather isolated form of Christian witness, but in relationship to a future Sudanese Church and the patient work of their predecessors thus acquired a new significance and challenged them to rethink their institutions in relationship to the Church. The existing missionary approach through social service and education continues, but with changes of method and new emphases, and is gradually orientating itself around the community, members of which from the beginning are being encouraged to take an in-

¹ The Sudan United Mission, for instance, sent Christian Nubas to study agriculture in Khartoum. These were accommodated in the Omdurman Hostel, and their Christian life and fellowship maintained through the Club and Church life.

creasingly direct share in the work, and above all to witness through social welfare and education.

Mission institutions will have an increasing importance in the future. The Government has instituted a twenty-year policy for the sudanization of its services. It is inevitable that Government services will steadily deteriorate for the Sudanese have not the mental background to maintain western standards, nor the spiritual background to hold positions of trust with the integrity that has been shown by British officials. This sudanization will mean that mission institutions will stand out very vividly from those of the Sudan Government and will offer a means of service, and standard of efficiency and moral integrity not offered by theirs.

The challenge of the southerners has also led to a great change of attitude towards direct Muslim evangelism. The missionaries looked upon their Muslim friends with new eyes. All kinds of indexes showed them that the work of the past had not been unfruitful and had had a deeper influence than they realized. They no longer took it for granted that the Sudanese were too deeply entrenched in Islam ever to be changed. They saw those who had received a western education dissatisfied by Islam as a spiritual basis for life, leaving it for a humanist basis, only to find that empty too; yet clinging to Islam as the social environment outside which they would be even more at sea. These challenges shocked missionaries to a realization that the greater the challenge the greater the opportunity presented. The work of the past has shown Muslims that the missionary's interest in them is genuine; but if that is so, then the missionary cannot restrain himself from desiring to share with them the fuller riches that are in Jesus Christ. The foundations of a Church have now been laid which can be a real home for converts from Islam.

Whilst admitting that the tactical methods of the past have done something to lay a foundation upon which to build,

the missions are now developing a strategy upon which the Church can develop a long term and far-reaching plan, thinking of the few native Christians as partners in the missionary enterprise. A project for a joint missionary endeavour in Omdurman has made a great advance with the grant of land by the Government for a Christian centre. This will be in the names of the C.M.S. and the United Presbyterian Mission jointly as trustees for the Sudanese Church. The centre will comprise a church, hall, club and hostel for southerners, pastor's house, a literary centre and a sports area. While for the time being in the Union Church the Anglican and Injili Churches will each follow its separate traditions as regards the Sacrament of the Holy Communion, every opportunity will be taken, as in fact is already being done, for joint worship through the ministry of the Word.

A word of warning should perhaps be given. The development of such an indigenous Church-community does not necessarily mean that Christianity will become more acceptable to Muslims. The theocentric character both of the Islamic system and the Christian Church must always mean a break to the convert and a re-orientation of life around a new centre. But it does mean that such re-orientation will be natural, that there will be no radical displacement in cultural life, and that the new community will be a real home to the convert. If the time comes when, with the intensification of the nationalist spirit, opposition is raised to the entrance of foreign missionaries, the Sudanese Christian Church will be securely planted.

3. *Natural Means of Approach*

We are committed in our new approach, in the same way as Islam, to a creative relationship towards indigenous life as the basic material in which Christian needs must become incarnated. The values of the Islamic heritage may then be redirected and enriched by contact with the spirit of Christ.

Indigenous means of expression, by relating new truth to the background of the hearer, will give it a natural setting and a fresh application to him, without obscuring the fact that it is challenging and revolutionary. So may these devotees of *awliyā* (saints) realize that the experience of unity with the Self-existent, which they seek to gain in the ecstatic repetition of the *dhikr* (religious exercises of a Sūfī fraternity), is to be found in its fulness in Christ and Him alone.

The western missionary it is true cannot impart indigenous quality, but it is possible for him to impart his own practices in such a way that they are shown to be variable and he can encourage indigenous expressions of devotion. He will be eager to seek for natural and not artificial approaches, to employ in a creative way the imaginative, emotional, and social means and forms of indigenous expression. The following are some possible methods by which missionaries in the Sudan may work through their community to the direct presentation of Christ.

The growth of a Christian *ṭarīqa* or brotherhood with a *ḥawṣiya* as its centre. This would be a centre for spiritual development by communal and solitary prayer, for training seekers of the Truth and a place of natural gravitation for Muslim inquirers, since their contact with Christianity would be in an atmosphere natural and congenial to them. Here the Christian message would be recognized less as a doctrine than as a new pattern of life, as *the* 'Way'. The economy of the centre would be that of any Muslim *ḥawṣiya*. Such a centre, however, could never be a forced growth and could only develop if the right man appeared.

The Abū Rōf and Abū Kadōq welfare centres are examples of the 'cellular' approach in practice. Contact is made and kept up with the whole family of the mothers who are taught how to care for their babies and who regard the welfare sister as their 'mother'. Thus their radiation influences the whole area.

Again, we have shown the central place that *ziyāra* (visitation) to shrines holds in the emotional life of Sudanese women. We need in any Sudanese Christian community to show by the simple act of adoration at Christian shrines how the temptations of the world, the flesh and the devil may be overcome; how the trials of life can be transformed to acts of inspiring devotion and service; how persecution can be accepted joyfully. In the personal drama of the Sacrament of Holy Communion at the shrine festivals will be recapitulated and symbolized the historic crisis in which the Divine entered into history, and died and rose again; the worshipper reliving the moment when He came.

This will involve the writing of Christian *mīlids* (birth-stories) and their dramatization. The supreme birth is above all central, but the possibility of *bayāns* means that any Christian saint may be introduced. The dedicatory saint's day of the local Church may be made a real 'red-letter' day. Surely the healing grace of the Communion ritual, answering each cry of the human heart, offers recreative possibilities beside which the *dhikr* is but a tawdry sham.

A Christian club or literary centre might be developed, not on western lines, but in the open, in a *hāsh*, like a coffee-house, where intercourse of the kind the Sudanese love, with its tea-ritual, will be atmospherically Christian.

These are all social means of indigenous expression, for in spite of the individualist appeal of Islam, the religion of the Sudanese is social in character. One thing we should be clear about, we seek not the accommodation of Christianity to the African Muslim's heritage, but to indigenize Christianity; therefore we may use this heritage as his natural mode of life-expression only if we use it creatively by giving it new content and direction. It is a question, not of relating Christianity to his means of expression because of their incompatibility with Christianity, but of taking his means of expression and relating them to Christianity.

6. *The Direct Presentation of the Christian Message*

It is difficult to write about the direct presentation of Christ to Muslims because the gap which separates the European from the African Muslim is so enormous. We shall be wise if we do not delude ourselves as to the extent that most of us can enter into the life and understand the thoughts of the Sudanese. But this gap does not excuse us from our call to witness. The western missionary must witness at every opportunity more directly than by 'good works', otherwise he cannot inspire the local church to evangelize, for the church, seeing the missionary absorbed in the secondary approach takes it to be the most important.

We could think of the conditions which would be laid on the leader of the Christian *Khalwa* we have mentioned. Such a one would never don a cloak of simplicity or he would be a false mystic. He would live a simple life among simple folk and then he could speak the profound simplicities of Christianity in simple words—that would be to preach a Gospel suitable for the Sudanese. Sharing their life and experience to such an extent that it would come natural to him to speak in the language that would reach the people, Christ would be to the Sudanese the answer to the yearnings of their hearts and that pearl of great price to gain which they would sell their all.

For this we await the time and the man! For us aliens one thing can help—a true attitude of deep Christian 'charity' and devotion can, at times, dispel that thick blanket-like fog around us sufficiently for us to reveal to one or another some treasure in Christianity without which he cannot live.

For us, moved with the desire to give, if not our whole selves, as much as we can, there are certain conditions of presentation which experience has taught us.

Two negative conditions of approach to individuals should

be stated because they are still very dominant. We shall learn the futility of the use of those half-truths of Islam which have been derived from Judaism or Christianity as points of contact; and we shall learn that doctrines should never be presented except to one who is ready to unite with us in reverence and faith.

Firstly, the many elements of Islam which have been derived from Christianity are no real starting-point, because by becoming a part of the body of Islamic doctrine, they belong to a different plane of religious apprehension, whose whole tendency is anti-Christian. The *nabi* 'Īsā of Islam has no connection whatever with Jesus Christ; so that veneration of 'Īsā as a prophet is no means for his enrichment as the eternal Christ. So, too, the logos doctrine of Sūfī speculation is an adventitious feature and not a vital element of the faith. We cannot start from Muslim thought any more than we can adapt the Gospel to it.

Secondly, scholarly missionaries have expended too much time and energy on the way to present Christian doctrine to Muslims as though this were a primary approach. We are called primarily to witness to Christ, not to interpret Him. Most men are irrational in matter of faith, and, since faith precedes knowledge, the primary approach has to be deeper than the mere striving for intellectual understanding. Some sort of mutual consciousness, in which the emotions and will, as well as the mind, are involved, must come first. Only with such a sympathetic basis will it be possible to explain how doctrines arose out of Christian experience. Conviction may then be advanced by an intellectual argument, but only when the experience behind is shared. Nor is it easy for hellenized Christianity to find any common ground or vocabulary with one brought up as a Muslim. It is a matter not only of the translation of words, but of meanings; of rethinking Christology in Islamic terms and Islamic categories of thought. Since Christian Arabic termi-

nology was built up centuries ago and it is so difficult to express Christianity through Islamic thought, we shall advocate the confrontation of the Muslim with the Christ of history and experience in the messianic terms of crisis and decision, letting the explanations, if needed, arise out of the actual experience whose dynamic will give life to the new terminology. Our aim is to demonstrate that the Christian Gospel aims at the Sūdāni in his actual needs, through a vivid presentation of God's dealings with Man through Jesus Christ.

Our primary witness and the background to witness in words is the Christian life lived in community, even if the community be composed only of missionaries. Whatever we say in words may be resented and can always be answered, but to the life lived in fellowship with Jesus Christ there is no answer. Where two or three are gathered together—through the relationships of Christian friendship, worship and disinterested service—there He is revealed. Such preparation of the ground is essential to the direct presentation of the Gospel.

No valid approach to Christ is possible except through experience, and our method must be to help the Muslim to enter into that experience. We are called to take the Muslim by the hand, as Philip took Nathaniel, and ask him to look with us at Jesus Christ, in expectancy that he, like ourselves, will learn in his own experience who He is. It is the function of the Father, not ours, to reveal the Son.

The Christian life and the Christian experience are far more effective than any method, but we cannot do without method. The foundation of our method will be the direct presentation of Jesus Christ in the power of the Holy Spirit, realizing that the work of bringing the Muslim to Christ can never be accomplished by human power. Given the right atmosphere, we are called simply to witness, with full respect to the freedom of our friend's personality, never arguing nor

watering down the Gospel, but 'speaking the truth in love', thinking of him, not as a Muslim to be won away from Islam, but simply as one who needs Christ and to whom we would make Him known. We are called to the simple proclamation of the Gospel message in the faith that Jesus Christ, the Word of God, will pierce through to the roots of our friend's personality and work the will of God in his heart in renewal and new life.

Our approach will be a fusion of the Christ of History and the Christ of Experience. We are called to teach the Muslim the simple Johannine story of the life of Christ, rooted in history yet super-historical, making Him—by our presentation and mutual study of the Bible, vivified with our own and others' experience—so to fulfil his needs, that He will leap out and into his life. The human approach is vital; some way must be found of bringing the hearer into contact with the dynamic historic forces of Christianity in relation to his own life and his life too in community. Our message will be human and vivid only if it is presented against the background of actual human problems of joy and sorrow, life and death.

The historical appeal intensifies if with it is linked the urgency of the messianic hour of crisis and challenge. Most Muslims are messianically-minded, but western Christians, whilst believing in a personal Messiah, have lost the messianic attitude and vision. Yet an insistence upon the *Parousia*, the hour of decision, is common to the eschatological trends of Christianity and Islam, and insistence upon the world as the scene of a divine drama should be as central in our approach as it was in the days of the Apostles. I am not suggesting that we should use Islamic eschatological elements, but that there is possibility of the hearers' response to such a presentation because of their own attitude of expectation. We shall ourselves develop an attitude of expectation. Blind and deaf they may be, but the moment will come when the eyes

of the blind will be opened, and the ears of the deaf unstopped. That is our confident expectation.

Upon those who have ears to hear we will be careful not to impose doctrine and institutional religion. Our message, like that of the early Christians, is simply the story and an insistence on the Moment. Later, when those facts are apprehended in terms of the eternal Christ, when the challenge is accepted, doctrines will inevitably arise out of them. It is our hope that the hearers, in their own way, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, will come to a realization of Christ's claims for Himself and upon them.

We believe, too, that we should encourage to the full all stages of witness within the Muslim community. At the same time we believe that Christian experience cannot be fully apprehended or find its true expression in any other way than within the Christian Church. The full response to the call of Christ involves absolute surrender of everything that tends to keep man away from life with Him. Our advanced teaching will therefore include the crisis of Baptism, and the Church as the Body of Christ. Those who, in view of the weakness in the life of the Church in the Near East, can stand the strain of full witness are few, but all missionaries to Muslims have known some great souls who have left all to follow Him and through persecution held firm to their faith.

A break away from the old Islamic environment is inevitable, but with it there comes communion with Christ through the Christian community. Much therefore depends upon that community, for it is only within the Church that the moral and spiritual energy is found which makes it possible for men and women to live after the 'pattern' of Christ. The weakness of the Church life has been too often the cause of the return of converts to Islam.

We should be ready to encourage fellowship between Christian and Muslim. There will be no danger in this, but

rather will it strengthen the convert, and, we hope, be the ideal witness, provided two conditions are observed, that there is continued teaching after baptism, and that the convert finds a true home in his new community.

Finally, to recapitulate the essentials of the direct approach, we shall proclaim the Gospel message in that spirit which springs from a genuine reverence for the Muslim's personality, on the one hand; and from a vital sense of the fact that power is all of God, on the other. Our sole aim is to present Christ, in expectancy that He, the Word of God, will eventually grip their lives and turn them from darkness into the light.

APPENDIX

THE 'SOUTHERN POLICY'

Sir Stewart Symes in an Appendix to his Report on the Sudan for 1937 defines the 'Southern Policy' somewhat loosely as follows:

The general conditions of the Northern Sudan must be sharply distinguished from those of the south. In the former region Arabic is generally a lingua franca and Arab social and cultural ideas are more familiar. South of latitude 12° is met a medley of tribes, with different languages and usages, in which few threads of common sentiment are discernible outside the primitive needs for food, reproduction and self-defence. Natural obstacles of terrain and intercommunication in a region subject to an annual alternation from inundation to—in many places—drought are greater. Trade is meagre and cash crops hard to find and market profitably. Sleeping sickness and 'fly' head the list of a large range of local evils. The whole of the region is highly malarious. Baleful memories of populations which were decimated in places and disorganized everywhere by the slave traffic created a miasma of distrust of any outside interference, which is only now being dispelled by extended contact with the officers of a new Government that has proved to be benevolent as well as powerful. More than thirty years of patient, cautious penetration by officials and others, including missionaries, is beginning to yield fruits in the reintegration of a normal tribal life, in good public security and a friendly attitude on the part of the natives. These southern societies are now in process of being reformed along indigenous patterns in accordance with their natural capacities and material requirements. This is the simple aim of the so-called 'Southern Policy'. It recognizes that southern genius is distinctively African and negroid. It conceives that the desirable nexus between the peoples of the Northern and Southern Sudan will

be best established on a firm basis of common interests and mutual tolerance. As time passes, this nexus will undoubtedly be strengthened and extended, but whether, initially, by passage of Northern Sudanese southwards or, as seems more likely, by an infiltration of 'southerners' seeking work in the more prosperous districts of the Northern Sudan, is still uncertain. In either case the primary urge will be an economic one and intermingling of the two—very different—racial stocks need entail a state of political subjection to neither. Improved relations already prevailing on the fringes of the north and south between 'Arabized' and negroid pastoralists promise well for the ultimate success of a policy which is clearly well adapted to suit local conditions and by its utilization of 'southern' employees, has provided a good and most economical administration of the region.¹

The announcement in September 1943 of the decision to form *Advisory Councils* which 'carries the process of association of Sudanese with Government beyond the sphere of Local Government into the sphere of Central Government', limits the operations of the councils to the Northern Sudan. The explanatory note says:

The reasons for the limitation of this Council to the six Northern Provinces (which have a population of over 4½ million) are two-fold. Firstly, the general conditions, social, cultural, economic and linguistic of the Northern Sudan are . . . sharply distinguished from those of the Southern Sudan. Secondly, the ethnic diversity and comparative backwardness of the southern tribes preclude the selection of suitable indigenous representatives. In short, the South cannot at present be adequately represented in the North, nor can the North represent the South. The ordinance, however, provides for the possibility of a separate Advisory Council for the Southern Provinces, or of an Advisory Council for the whole Sudan, whenever either of these alternatives may be found desirable and feasible.

¹ *Report on the Administration of the Sudan in 1937*, App IV, para 7 pp 136-7

The Sudan Government has always been preoccupied with the northern Sudan because the north has been much more vocal and its problems more continuously before the Central Government. The south has received little attention on account of the backwardness and conservatism of the pagan tribes, together with ideals of their preservation as living museums, multiplicity of languages, difficulties of communication and economic development.

This *laissez-faire* policy has proved impossible in practice. During the war years the south has been awakening. Many new points of contact have been set up between southerners and western civilization. Those who have received education in mission schools are becoming increasingly conscious of the economic and intellectual disabilities under which they live. This awakening has brought home to the Government its moral obligation to foster their moral and material welfare so that they can play their part in modern Africa, to which end plans for very considerable future development are now (1945) being prepared.

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